



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913  
PH (517) 373.1707 | FAX (517) 373.3935  
[www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/toy/](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/toy/)

For Immediate Release  
December 2, 2005

Contact: Heather Lombardini  
(517) 373-1707

## **Sen. Laura Toy announces state doing its part to help residents with higher home heating costs this winter**

**LANSING** – In response to the considerable energy cost increases predicted, state Sen. Laura M. Toy, R-Livonia, announced today that the state is taking steps to ensure that vulnerable residents stay warm this winter.

“This winter, people are going to be paying double and triple what they were just three years ago to heat their homes,” Sen. Toy said. “We really need to be watching out for our seniors and other vulnerable residents this winter and doing everything we can to help.”

The Michigan Public Service Commission has already issued emergency rules to govern the billing practices of utility companies which will be effective until March 31, 2006. The emergency rules require utilities to give all customers longer to pay their bills this winter. They also outline strict guidelines for utility companies to work with low-income families and senior citizens to prevent shut-off during the winter months.

“As soon as someone knows that they are going to have trouble paying their bill on time they should contact their utility company immediately,” Sen. Toy said. “Especially under these new special rules, the utilities are ready to work with customers who need assistance.”

In October, the Public Service Commission also released \$41 million from the Low-Income Energy Assistance Fund created by the Legislature to seven organizations including the Michigan Department of Human Services, The Heat and Warmth Fund (THAW) and the Salvation Army to assist low-income utility customers with their bills.

Experts estimate Michigan residents will see a 40 to 50 percent increase in home heating costs this winter compared to last year. However, they also point out that this is lower than the 70 percent increases predicted in other states.

“Michigan is fortunate to sit on large natural gas reserves which can supply a good portion of our state’s natural gas needs,” Sen. Toy said. “This insulates us a little better than other states from fluctuations caused by natural disasters such as hurricanes Katrina and Rita that recently struck the Gulf Coast region.”

For more information including information on available assistance and tips to reduce your household energy costs, residents can visit [www.michigan.gov/bewinterwise](http://www.michigan.gov/bewinterwise). Residents are also able to contact the Michigan Public Service Commission toll-free at 1-800-292-9555.

###

Editors note: Senator Toy's cable program which airs on Bright House Networks in Livonia and Redford Township, and on Comcast and Wide Open West in Garden City and Westland this month features Michigan Public Service Commissioner Laura Chappelle and further discusses home heating issues facing Michigan residents this winter.